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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Special Representative Akashi expresses concern at continued fighting in Croatia despite cessation of hostilities agreement; appeals to both sides to exercise maximum restraint.

+ Secretary-General begins official visit to Fiji; meets with President and Prime Minister in Suva.

+ Secretary-General recommends Security Council extend UNOMIG mandate for six months; says withdrawal of Mission would lead to resumption of conflict in Abkhazia.

+ Prime Minister of Rwanda chairs meeting of international commission of inquiry into events at Kibeho camp.

+ United Nations Committee against Torture adopts views on four complaints.

+ ESCAP concludes annual session by endorsing action programme for regional cooperation in human resources development.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi today expressed concern that fighting had continued in some parts of Croatia despite the agreement on a complete cessation of hostilities yesterday. He noted that there had been continued tensions and threatening actions in all areas. He appealed to both sides to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from all provocative actions and any retaliation.

Some of the violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement appeared to be isolated incidents caused by a lack of communication between commanders and soldiers in the field, Mr. Akashi said. He warned that those incidents could lead to an escalation which threatened the remaining prospects for peace in the area.

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For information media—not an official record

Mr. Akashi called on the Croatian Government to cooperate fully with United Nations forces and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) in implementing the cessation of hostilities agreement.

In a related development, the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia announced that the Croatian parties had accepted invitations to meet in Geneva. The meeting would be held next week, not on Friday as originally hoped.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has begun a two-day official visit to Fiji, the first by a United Nations Secretary-General in 19 years. He was received upon arrival in Suva by Prime Minister Suluweti Rabuka and Lord Mayor Jone Kauvesi.

The Secretary-General then held talks with Prime Minister Rabuka and members of his Cabinet. He expressed appreciation for Fiji's contribution to the work of the United Nations, and paid tribute to the 32 Fijian soldiers who had died over the years in the service of world peace. Fiji's support for the Organization showed how a small country with political will could play an effective role in establishing international peace and stability.

Prime Minister Rabuka reiterated Fiji's strong commitment to the United Nations and said Fiji was ready to send more troops to peace-keeping operations if asked to do so. He raised the problem of arrears in the payments due to the country for its participation in such operations. The Secretary-General reviewed the Organization's financial crisis, which resulted from late payments by Member States of contributions to the regular and peace-keeping budgets.

The Secretary-General later had a meeting with the President of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. He also met with United Nations Resident Coordinator Somsey Norindr and representatives of United Nations agencies in Fiji. Despite the attention which the media focused on peace-keeping, he stated, the core of the work of the United Nations system was in development, which was a prerequisite for peace.

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The Secretary-General has recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for six months. The extension would be subject to revision in the light of the decision taken by the Commonwealth of Independent States regarding the mandate of its peace-keeping force in Georgia. He warned that the untimely withdrawal of UNOMIG and the CIS force would lead to open confrontation and the resumption of conflict.

In a report on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, dated 1 May, the Secretary-General said the dialogue between the parties had encountered difficulties. He stressed the need for progress in the political

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negotiations, which would require patience and perseverance. Experience had shown that tense political stalemates in which neither peace nor war prevailed did not allow the creation of stability and public confidence. On the contrary, pressures built to change the political circumstances or the situation in the ground.

UNOMIG's military observers had been able to perform the tasks assigned to them, he continued. However, their presence had not contributed substantially to the creation of conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons. The main reason for that situation was that neither the Georgian Government nor the Abkhaz authorities had given safety guarantees, as required by the Quadripartite Agreement of 4 April 1994.

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The international commission of inquiry into the recent events at Kibeho held its first meeting in Kigali yesterday, according to a United Nations spokesman. The meeting, which was chaired by the Prime Minister of Rwanda, dealt with organizational matters. Most of the countries participating, including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States and the United Kingdom, were represented by their Ambassadors to Rwanda. They indicated that their designated representatives would arrive in Kigali over the weekend. The commission is scheduled to hold its first official working session on Monday.

In an another development, Rwanda's Interior Minister met with United Nations and non-governmental organization representatives yesterday. He announced that they would be given access to the communes to which internally displaced persons were returning, as well as to local prisons.

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The United Nations Committee against Torture has concluded that the decision by Canada to expel an asylum-seeker who claimed he feared torture if returned to Pakistan would constitute a violation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In the light of that conclusion, the Committee was of the view that the State party had an obligation to refrain from forcibly returning him to Pakistan.

The Committee also decided that a communication from two citizens of Spain against that country, and two communications from Zairian citizens against Switzerland were inadmissible.

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The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has concluded its annual session in Bangkok, Thailand, by endorsing an action programme for strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development. It took that action in adopting a report containing 12 resolutions.

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Senior officials from some 60 countries, together with representatives from United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, took part in the week-long session. Apart from the theme topic of strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development, they discussed regional economic cooperation, the environment and sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and transport and communications. They also focused on the special needs of the region's least developed, land-locked and island developing countries.

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